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Statement of Carl Vinson (D-Ga.), Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.

Carl Vinson (D-Ga.) announced today that he would introduce a bill next week requiring that appointments to the Joint Chiefs of Staff be for a term of four years.

Mr. Vinson said that his proposed legislation would make the term of office for members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the same for each member.

"Under existing law," said Mr. Vinson, "only the Commandant of the Marine Corps must be appointed for four years. The law with regard to the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, authorizes appointments up to a period of four years."

"As a result," said Mr. Vinson, "it has been possible in the past for members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to be appointed for one or two-year terms."

"The bill I will introduce will require all appointments to be for a four-year period, although each member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will serve during the pleasure of the President. In other words, a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff may be removed even though appointed for four years, but he will not have to be concerned about his reappointment unless he is removed by the President."

"Under the bill I will introduce, a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff may not be reappointed."

Mr. Vinson said that he was not introducing his bill as a result of Admiral McDonald's appointment as the new Chief of Naval Operations. "I have been thinking about this matter for some time and I have come to the conclusion that the Joint Chiefs of Staff system requires a continuity and the assurance

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that an individual appointed to that position will be able to act as the senior military member of his Service for a sufficient length of time in order to become thoroughly familiar with his job. Members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff must be free to express their independent judgments on all military matters. They should not be concerned about whether or not they will be reappointed."

"If this bill is enacted," Mr. Vinson stated, "it will strengthen the Joint Chiefs of Staff system; it will strengthen the civilian-military relationship that now exists in the Department of Defense, and will permit each member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to function in the manner contemplated by the National Security Act."

Mr. Vinson further said that "officers who are appointed to the highest military body of the country should have the assurance that unless they earn the displeasure of the President, they will be allowed to complete a full four-year term."

Mr. Vinson concluded his statement by saying "We want the best professional military men possible to be appointed to these positions. We expect them to be experts in their Service. We want their independent judgment. Only when a man is appointed for a full four-year term can he exercise his independence and express his opinion without having to be concerned about whether or not he will be reappointed. If he does not do his job properly, he should be removed; but he should not be constantly concerned about whether or not he will be reappointed. Under the bill I will introduce, if it is enacted, a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will serve for a period of a full four years and may not thereafter be reappointed. He will know that for a period of four years he can devote his entire energy to doing the job for which he has been appointed."

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